

February 27, 2015
Appropriations Committee Public Hearing Testimony
Rachel Callan
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Good evening Chairpersons and Distinguished Members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Rachel Callan, and I am a Brain Injury Specialist, at the Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut (BIAC). I reside in the town of Berlin. I am submitting this testimony in opposition to **H.B. No. 6846, AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HUMAN SERVICES PROGRAMS**. I ask that you oppose this recommendation and commit to not only restoring but increasing funding for the Brain Injury Alliance of CT, protecting the grant that allows us to serve the community of individuals with brain injuries.

With this budget proposal, the Governor has once again recommended the elimination of the funding for BIAC. This is based on the same misinformation that has been used for the past nine years, that BIAC is an advocacy organization.

Unfortunately, what the Governor has failed to recognize is that the Department of Social Services contracts with BIAC to provide services required as part of the Medicaid ABI Waiver program. If BIAC's contract with DSS were to end, with the cut of this vital funding, DSS would no longer have the ability to provide these essential services required as part of the ABI Medicaid Waiver. Each year since 2009, this grant has been threatened despite the fact that our operating funds only cost the state \$120,920 this past year. Each year, you, the Appropriations Committee, have listened to and heard the concerns of those we support - survivors, family members, caregivers, and professionals - and reinstated our ever so important funding. We ask that you continue this trend.

As a Brain Injury Specialist, I am responsible for operating and maintaining a Toll Free helpline which is accessed daily by survivors of brain injury, their friends and family, caregivers, professionals, as well as educators, state agency personnel from DCF, DDS, DMHAS, DOC, DSS, veterans and even you as members of the Connecticut legislature. All of these individuals are seeking

information on supports and services for individuals with brain injuries that they are unable to access through alternative routes. We are a critical element in the State, No one else does what BIAC does.

Despite annual threat of elimination to our minimal operational grant and an increase of over 600% in calls to the helpline, we continue to meet the needs of those impacted by brain injury, on behalf of DSS as efficiently as we do and as effectively. If our grant is eliminated we will no longer be able to provide these essential services. To many CT citizens we are a lifeline that assists in the optimization of their recovery. Ultimately, this budget cut will increase the workload at DSS, while decreasing access to vital information for those directly impacted.

We appreciate and are thankful for your support in the past and hope that you will continue to support our mission by committing to restoring and increasing funding for the Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut (with specific language referencing the grant in back of budget). Thank you for your time.